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DE RUEHJM #0373/01 0611451
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021451Z MAR 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4241
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000373

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [PBTS](#) [KWBG](#)
SUBJECT: B'TSELEM REPORTS PLANS FOR EXPANDED SEWAGE SYSTEMS
IN WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS IN PREPARATION FOR EXPANSION OF
SETTLEMENTS THEMSELVES

REF: JERUSALEM 239

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. NGO B'tselem has published on March 3 a report revealing Civil Administration plans for vastly expanded sewage systems in eight West Bank settlements. B'tselem claims the plans signal GOI intentions to expand the settlements themselves. Much of the proposed sewage system expansion would be in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, south of Jerusalem, but other locations include E-1 and northern West Bank settlements outside the barrier. The Gush Etzion Regional Council Chairman confirmed that sewage system upgrades are in the planning process, and did not rule out future settlement expansion. Separately, the IDF published a confiscation order to build a 295-meter fence separating the Palestinian village of Beit Ummar (southwest of Bethlehem) from a nearby highway. End summary.

B'tselem Report: Sewage System
Plans Signal Settlement Expansion

2. (C) B'tselem researcher Eyal Haruveni called Poloff's attention to a March 3 B'tselem report, based on documents obtained through Israel's Freedom of Information Act. Haruveni said the documents contain minutes from the past two years of meetings of the Civil Administration's environmental planning subcommittee. The minutes describe sewage system planning for eight West Bank settlements. Haruveni said planning at the subcommittee level of the Civil Administration is the first step towards GOI approval, and remarked, "the minutes never mention the issue of freezing settlement construction; clearly Israel's Roadmap obligations never made it down to that level."

3. (C) The B'tselem report estimates numbers of possible new residential units based on the scope of proposed expanded sewage systems. Haruveni said the sewage system for Gva'ot settlement (west of Bethlehem), currently home to twelve settler families, has been planned to accommodate 550 additional housing units in the near term and 4,450 units at a later stage. The Civil Administration minutes, Haruveni said, show septic system plans that would support approximately 2,000 additional units for Bet Ayn settlement (southwest of Bethlehem), 254 additional units for Rimoni (northeast of Ramallah), 700 additional units for Kfar Adumim (east of Jerusalem), 3,500 units for E-1 (reftel), 250 additional units for Eshkolot (southwest of Hebron), and an unspecified number of additional units for Einav (northwest of Nablus) and Mevo Dotan (southwest of Jenin). (Note: While Gva'ot and Bet Ayn are located in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, Einav and Mevo Dotan are both fairly isolated settlements, approximately six miles east of the Green Line, housing about 125 and 75 families respectively. End note.)

Settler Reaction

14. (C) Gush Etzion Regional Council Chairman Shaul Goldstein told Poloff on February 27 that some settlements are not yet connected to sewage system infrastructure, saying, "we're connecting them one by one." When asked about B'tselem's report on West Bank sewage system expansion, Goldstein's commented, "they should be happy we're taking care of the environment," and would not deny plans for settlement expansion in his region. He said Prime Minister-designate Binyamin Netanyahu "doesn't want to quarrel with the Americans on settlements, but he was elected on a platform that he should be permitted to carry out."

Confiscation Order for Fence in Beit Ummar

15. (C) Separately, the municipal council of the Palestinian village of Beit Ummar (southwest of Bethlehem) informed Poloff that the IDF issued an order on February 25 confiscating land for a 295-meter barbed-wire fence. The fence would separate Beit Ummar from the nearby highway (Route 60). The municipal council will appeal the confiscation order to the IDF appeal board at the Civil Administration. (Note: Beit Ummar is immediately south of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, where Regional Council Chairman Shaul Goldstein complained of an uptick in Palestinians throwing rocks at settler vehicles on Route 60. End note.)

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WALLES